



THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

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MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

SUBJECT: Armed Forces Equal Opportunity Survey

Attached is the report on the Armed Forces Equal Opportunity Survey. The survey asked service members about their perceptions of personnel issues in the military and about military policies intended to ensure fair treatment and equal opportunity for all military members. It also asked about service members' experiences with other military personnel and Defense civilian employees and with civilians in the local community around their installation. This survey is the first of its kind. No survey of this magnitude and level of detail has previously been undertaken to assess service members' perceptions of and experiences with personnel and equal opportunity programs and procedures in relation to their race or ethnic heritage.

Service members' responses generally affirmed the successes associated with the longstanding commitment of civilian and military leaders to equal opportunity in the Armed Forces:

- Large majorities of service members in all groups believe that racial/ethnic relations today are as good or better than they were five years ago.
- Service members perceived that there had been greater improvement in race and ethnic relations in the military than in civilian society and that opportunities and conditions were better in the military than as a civilian.
- Only very small percentages of service members said "not at all" when asked if racial/ethnic relations were good at their installation or aboard ship."
- Relatively small percentages of members in each racial/ethnic group said they experienced an incident of harassment or discrimination related to the military personnel life cycle.
- Most service members reported that they had formed friendships and social bonds across lines of race and ethnicity and that they had done so much more frequently than that did before they entered military service.

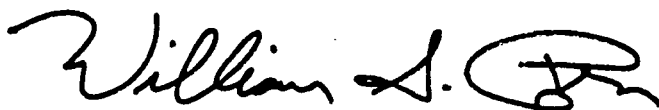


At the same time, responses to the survey point to areas that must be considered as we work to ensure equal opportunity and fair treatment in the Armed Forces:

- There are differences in the way service members of different races and ethnic groups perceived the state of equal opportunity. African American service members were more pessimistic about the degree of progress in equal opportunity in the nation than were members of other race or ethnic groups.
- Many service members of all races and ethnic groups reported negative experiences they felt were based on their race or ethnicity. Service members reported having had such experiences on military installations and in surrounding communities.
- Minority service members were more likely than Whites to report being unfairly punished. Some 9 percent of Blacks, 6 percent of Hispanics, 4 percent of Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 5 percent of American Indian/Alaska Natives reported being unfairly punished in comparison to only 2 percent of Whites.

I am convinced that this important survey can inform our actions as we work to improve our processes and practices that are designed to ensure equal opportunity for and fair treatment of all men and women in uniform. To this end, a complete electronic file of the survey data is being provided to each Service to assist in their review and in the assessment of modifications and improvements of Service programs and procedures that may be warranted.

The Deputy Secretary of Defense will host a meeting of the Defense Equal Opportunity Council in the near future to review the survey results with the Department's senior leadership.



cc: Commandant of the Coast Guard